Saturday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 6:30-34): The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

“‘Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat”

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Today the Gospel presents us with a situation, a need and a paradox that are very current.

A situation. The Apostles are “stressed”: “People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat” (Mk 6:31). We often find ourselves in the same hustle and bustle. Work demands a good part of our energy; the family, where each member wants to feel our love; the other activities to which we have committed ourselves, which do us good and, at the same time, benefit others... Where there is a will, there is a way? Perhaps it is more reasonable to recognize that we cannot do everything we would like.

A need. The body, the head and the heart claim a right: rest. In these verses we have a manual, often ignored, on rest. This is where communication stands out. The Apostles “reported all they had done” (Mk 6:30). Communication with God, following the thread of the deepest part of our heart. And – what a surprise! – we find God waiting for us. And he waits to meet us in our weariness.

Jesus tells them: “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while” (Mk 6:31). God’s plan includes a place for rest! In fact, our existence, with all its weight, must rest on God. The restless Augustine discovered this: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you.” God’s rest is creative, not “anesthetic”: encountering his love centers our hearts and our thoughts.

A paradox. The Gospel scene ends “badly”: the disciples cannot rest. Jesus's plan fails: they are

approached by the people. They have not been able to “disconnect.” We often cannot free ourselves from our obligations (children, spouse, work…): it would be like betraying ourselves! It is necessary to find God in these realities. If there is communication with God, if our heart rests in Him, we will relativize useless tensions… and reality - stripped of chimeras - will better show God’s imprint. In Him, there, we are to rest.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “There is no rest which is not a weariness, unless it be suffered with God, or for God.” (Saint Teresa of Ávila)

- “The divine rest of the seventh day does not allude to an inactive God, but emphasizes the fullness of what has been accomplished. It casts upon it a ‘contemplative’ gaze which does not look to new accomplishments but enjoys the beauty of what has already been achieved.” (Saint John Paul II)

- “God's action is the model for human action. If God ‘rested and was refreshed’ on the seventh day, man too ought to ‘rest’ and should let others, especially the poor, ‘be refreshed.’ (Ex 23:12). The sabbath brings everyday work to a halt and provides a respite. It is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2172)